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Garth Ennis John McCrea Darick Robertson

The BOYS™

FIFTY-THREE

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The BOYS™

FIFTY-THREE

In a world where costumed heroes soar through the sky and masked vigilantes prowl the night, someone's got to make sure the "supes" don't get out of line. And someone will.

Billy Butcher, Wee Hughie, Mother's Milk, The Frenchman and The Female are The Boys: a CIA-backed team of very dangerous people, each one dedicated to the struggle against the most lethal force on Earth- superpower. Some superheroes have to be watched. Some have to be controlled. And some of them- sometimes- need to be taken out of the picture.

That's when you call in **The Boys**.

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TODAY THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. YOU GROW UP WITH THEM.

EVEN IF YOU DON'T CARE, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT KNOW THEY EXIST.

BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THAT FRAME OF REFERENCE; ALL I COULD THINK WAS *WHY ARE THESE LUNATICS DRESSED LIKE THIS...?*

"IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THE COLONEL HAVE A QUIET WORD, JUST TO HELP ME UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION."

SIR, ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS IS FOR REAL?

YES, GREG.

THEY'VE BEEN ATTACHED TO THE BATTALION? THEY'LL BE GOING INTO COMBAT WITH US?

YES.

DOING *WHAT,* FOR CHRIST'S SAKE--?

ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT IT'S LEGIT. SENATOR BUSH IS CARRYING A LETTER SIGNED BY EISENHOWER HIMSELF.

WE'RE TO AFFORD BOTH HIM AND ANY REPRESENTATIVE OF V.A.C. ALL THE ASSISTANCE WE CAN RENDER...

IKE PLANNING A MOVE INTO POLITICS, IS HE...?

I HAVE MY ORDERS, GREG.

I'M SORRY.

SOLDIER BOY AND THE AVENGING SQUAD REPORTING FOR DUTY, SIR!

YOU KEEP DOING THAT OUTDOORS, YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE ME SNIPER MEAT.

BARBARY COAST

part two

UH...?

OFFICERS GET SALUTED: OFFICERS GET SHOT.

"AVENGING SQUAD"?

THAT ISN'T FINAL. THE THEME WILL EITHER BE REVENGE OR JUSTICE, WE'RE STILL TRYING TO DECIDE.

WE BEING THE BOYS AT V.A.C.

CORRECT.

YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE RESULTS OF FIVE YEARS' WORK BY OUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT'S MOST BRILLIANT MINDS. HUMAN BEINGS ***ADAPTED BY SCIENCE***--TO BE STRONGER, SMARTER AND FASTER THAN ANY OTHER SOLDIER ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

THIS IS THE FUTURE, CAPTAIN MALLORY. YOU WOULD DO WELL TO EMBRACE IT.

SO THIS IS THEIR FIRST GO AT *V*...

MORE OR LESS. VOGELBAUM CAME OUT OF GERMANY IN 'THIRTY-EIGHT, HE'D ALREADY BEEN WORKING ON IT FOR A WHILE.

WELL HERE'S WHAT I'M EMBRACING RIGHT NOW, MISTER NEUMAN: SIXTH BATTALION IS SERIOUSLY UNDER STRENGTH IN PERSONNEL AND STANDS AT BARELY ONE THIRD ITS REGULAR COMPLEMENT OF TANKS. WHAT WE DO HAVE ARE NEW AND UNFAMILIAR; WE HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED WORKING OUT THE BUGS IN THEM.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME HOW THE FUTURE'S GOING TO HELP WITH ANY OF THAT?

HNNNHHRRRRNNNNHHHH

NNNAAAAAAAARRRRRRHHHH

GO ON, STEEL KNIGHT!

SO...THEY CAN...?

LIFT IT. FLIP IT OVER, IF THEY SO CHOOSE.

WHUFF!!

BABY BELL

TH-TH-THANKS, LADDIO--!

YOU *BETCHA,* PARTNER!

IS THAT IT?

FOR NOW.

I'M NOT SAYING THAT MEN LIFTING A THIRTY-SIX TON SHERMAN A FOOT OFF THE GROUND IS SOMETHING YOU SEE EVERY DAY, BUT SOME OF THE GERMAN TANKS WEIGH ALMOST TWICE THAT. AND THEY WILL BE SHOOTING AT YOU AT THE TIME, DON'T FORGET.

LET THEM. THE CRIMSON COUNTESS CAN *MELT TANKS* WITH HER POWER BLASTS.

SAY THE WORD...

NOT ONE OF OURS, IF YOU DON'T MIND. HOW CAREFULLY HAVE YOU THOUGHT THIS THROUGH?

I BEG YOUR PARDON--?

GREG...

BETTY

LOOK-- I'M NOT SAYING--

HEY! SKIPPER! WHO ARE YOUR NEW BUDDIES?

YOUR CREW LIKELY TO PASS MUSTER AT THE NEXT INSPECTION, *SERGEANT?!*

HHHH.

YOU PEOPLE PROBABLY THINK THE KIND OF ACTION WE SEE IS BIG AND FLASHY. MACHINES AGAINST MACHINES, UNSTOPPABLE METAL BEASTS: JUST THE BACKDROP YOU WANT WHEN THE REPORTERS SHOW UP TO SEE THIS... ***SQUAD*** OF YOURS.

BUT YOU HAVEN'T RUN PROPER TESTS. YOU HAVEN'T FACED UP TO THE REALITY.

NOW, CAPTAIN MALLORY...!

AND THE REALITY ***IS,*** SENATOR, THAT YOU ARE DANGEROUSLY OUT OF YOUR DEPTH. BEFORE WE TAKE NEW WEAPONS INTO BATTLE WE TEST THEM AND TRAIN WITH THEM AS THOROUGHLY AS WE CAN, BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO BE DEPENDING ON THEM FOR OUR LIVES.

AND LIKE I SAID, WE ARE UNDER STRENGTH AND IN NO SHAPE TO FACE KRAUT IRON--AND NOW YOU EXPECT US TO SOMEHOW COPE WITH ***THIS?***

BUT THAT'S WHY THE SQUAD ARE HERE, SO THEY CAN TRAIN WITH YOU. ISN'T THIS A QUIET PART OF THE LINE?

IT'S STILL THE LINE, WE'RE STILL INSIDE GERMANY. NO ONE WHO HASN'T SEEN COMBAT HAS ANY BUSINESS BEING HERE AT ALL.

IRON...?

ARMOR.

WHAT, YOU MEAN LIKE A SUIT OF ARMOR, LIKE A KNIGHT?

TANKS, YOU--

OH! OH, WELL, THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT! THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THAT IN THIS AREA, WE ALREADY CHECKED IT OUT!

COME AGAIN?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU CHECKED IT OUT...?

YES, AS SOON AS WE ARRIVED!

I WANTED TO BE CERTAIN EVERYTHING WAS SECURE, SO I HAD MANBOT, THE BUZZER AND EAGLE THE ARCHER GO UP AND TAKE A LOOK! THE WEATHER MIGHT BE KEEPING OUR PLANES OUT OF ACTION--BUT IT CAN'T STOP ***THE AVENGING SQUAD!***

THESE BOYS CAN FLY RIGHT DOWN LOW, NO ONE'S GOING TO GET PAST THEM. AND I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THEY DIDN'T SEE A SINGLE THING...

THEY CAN ***FLY***--?

WAIT A MINUTE, ON WHOSE AUTHORITY DID YOU ORDER A RECONNAISSANCE MISSION?

I'M SOLDIER BOY!

YOU DIDN'T THINK TO ASK ANYONE?

WHY... UM...?

HEY, COLONEL--

BECAUSE ANYONE SEEING ***FLYING MEN*** MIGHT GET A LITTLE SUSPICIOUS. MIGHT SEND OUT SCOUTS IN THEIR LAST NOTED DIRECTION.

WHO IF THEY COME FAR ENOUGH AND LOOK HARD ENOUGH, MIGHT RUN ACROSS AN ARMORED BATTALION ***NEITHER READY NOR EQUIPPED TO PROPERLY DEFEND ITSELF...***

"IT WASN'T INSTINCT.

"WASN'T COMBAT EXPERIENCE.

"NOTHING REALLY...KICKED IN."

IT WAS JUST A JUMBLE OF THOUGHTS IN MY HEAD: WELL, WE HAVEN'T SEEN A GERMAN IN WEEKS, THEN AGAIN, BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY, JESUS, I'M GOING TO BE EATING A TON OF SHIT IF THIS TURNS OUT TO BE NOTHING...

BUT FIRST I WAS WALKING. THEN I WAS RUNNING.

THEN I LET MY FEET TAKE OVER, AND I WAS FLAT-OUT SPRINTING.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU COULD HAVE BROUGHT DOWN ON US, SENATOR? YOU TOLD ME YOUR PEOPLE WOULD BE UNDER *MY COMMAND*--

AND THEY ARE, COLONEL, I ASSURE YOU THEY ARE...

THEY DIDN'T SEE ANYONE--!

CAPTAIN MALLORY?

MOUNT UP! START UP!

SKIPPER--?

MOUNT UP! START UP!

CODY, MOUNT UP! GET HER ROLLING!

OH, JESUS CHRIST--!

NO!!

WHAT'S--

GERMANS!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? MOVE!

KRAUT PATROL GET LUCKY?

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES, HUH?

NAAAAAHH--!

EEEEEIIIIIGGGHHH!!

HOLD YOUR FIRE 'TIL YOU HAVE A TARGET! WATCH OUT FOR OUR GUYS!

GOTTA GET ABOVE IT!

GOTTA FLY!

GOTTA SOAR LIKE AN EAGLE...!

WHAT THE FUCK--

YOU STUPID FUCKING BASTARD AAAAAAAAAHH!!

?

PANZERS VORWAERTS MARSCH.

OH JESUS CHRIST ALMIGHTY, PANTHERS!!

SONS OF BITCHES'LL HAVE US FOR BREAKFAST! GUNNER, TANK, ARMOR-PIERCING!

TRAVERSE RIGHT...!

STEADY... ON!

THIS AIN'T NO FUCKIN' PATROL, THIS IS A FULL-SCALE ATTACK--!

RANGE FIFTY! FIRE!

"THE NEW GUN WAS WORSE THAN USELESS, OF COURSE."

"BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN ALWAYS RELY ON."

UH?

CODY?

AND THESE WERE REAL MEN, DON'T FORGET.

"REAL FLESH AND BLOOD."

"NOT MULTICOLORED SHIT DREAMED UP BY OVERGROWN KIDS."

"WHO'S GOING TO TELL THE WORLD ABOUT THEM?"

"WHO'S GOING TO MAKE SURE THEIR STORIES LIVE ON?"

THE REST OF THE HISTORY OF THE BULGE...

WELL, IT'S AN EPIC.

CHAOS AT FIRST, MEN RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES, OR QUITTING... BUT OTHERS DOING WHAT THEY CAN. LITTLE PATCHWORK UNITS THROWN TOGETHER FROM WHOEVER COMES ALONG--SOME CORPORAL GRABS A COUPLE OF ENGINEERS, A DRIVER OUT OF GAS, A ***COOK,*** AND THEY PICK UP THEIR RIFLES AND CHOOSE THEIR SPOT.

AND HOLD.

THEY'RE BLEEDING THE GERMANS OUT, YOU SEE. ONE PINPRICK AFTER ANOTHER.

THEY'RE BUYING TIME FOR THE AIRBORNE TO GET INTO POSITION AT BASTOGNE, AND FOR PATTON'S THIRD ARMY TO MAKE ITS WAY UP FROM THE SOUTH. AND PRETTY SOON EVERYONE'S FIGHTING, HITTING THE BASTARDS WITH EVERYTHING THEY'VE GOT, UNTIL THE SUN COMES OUT AGAIN...

THEN THE AIR FORCE CAN GO BACK TO WORK.

LONG TIME AGO, NOW. MOST PEOPLE DON'T EVEN KNOW ANY MORE.

BUT--

"IT'S WHY I'LL ALWAYS BE PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN SOLDIER."

"MY BATTLE, THOUGH, IT ENDED THERE IN THAT CLEARING.

"NOT LONG AFTER NIGHTFALL A PANZER-GRENADIER PATROL CAME THROUGH--WEHRMACHT THIS TIME, NOT S.S., THANK CHRIST--AND FOUND ME IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL. THEY PATCHED ME UP AND SENT ME TO THE REAR, AND I SPENT THE REST OF THE WAR IN A P.O.W. COMPOUND OUTSIDE LEIPZIG.

"IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE I TOLD ANYONE WHAT HAPPENED. TOOK ME LONG ENOUGH JUST TO GET IT STRAIGHT IN MY HEAD."

"THE CONDITION MY MIND WAS IN, I'M LUCKY I EVEN MANAGED THAT MUCH."

HEP MUH

HEP MUH

HEP MUH

HEP M--

YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE LEFT...?

MM-HM.

WHEN THE KRAUTS FOUND ME I WAS SITTING IN THE SNOW, STARING AT A PIECE OF BLOODY LEATHER. MUST HAVE COME FROM SOMEONE'S COSTUME. HAD THE BRAND NAME STAMPED ON.

I DON'T KNOW WHEN I PICKED IT UP, BUT IT WAS...THE FRAGMENT OF THE DAY I TOOK AWAY WITH ME.

VOUGHT AMERICAN CONSOLIDATED

AND I THOUGHT THEN, LIKE I THINK NOW: HOW DARE THEY PUT THAT WORD IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING SO DISGUSTING...

BUT I GUESS THAT'S AN OLD TRICK, RIGHT?

next: "...AND BY GOD, WE ARE GOING TO COLLECT."